

Attorney General Seeking Support In Fight Against Methamphetamine Use

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The number of youth using methamphetamine in Navajo and Apache counties is among the highest in the state, and exceeds the national average, according to Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard.

Goddard visited the Navajo County Board of Supervisors Tuesday to solicit their continued support in the fight against methamphetamine.

"The way I see it, a big part of my mandate is to try to prevent crimes from happening," Goddard told the board.

He explained that while his office has no control over the funding for the Arizona Meth Project, he has been active in producing educational materials and by supporting efforts by various groups to fight methamphetamine. Goddard noted that Arizona's anti-meth program is based on a successful pilot program in Montana. According to Goddard, a number of components of the Montana project are in the process of being re-created with a focus on Arizona. He noted that a special outreach to Native Americans, as well as videos and materials in Spanish, is being created to meet the needs of Arizona residents.

Goddard told the board that he is thankful for the counties and cities that took the lead in controlling over-the-counter pseudo-ephedrine products used to make methamphetamines.

"We've made a tremendous amount of progress," he said. "When the legislature failed to do something to control pseudo-ephedrines, the counties and the cities stepped forward."

He also praised the Navajo County anti-methamphetamine coalition, noting that it has been very active, and he hopes that funding for such projects will continue. Goddard told the board that he does not expect the state to continue to provide the funding, but he is hopeful that with a successful first year of anti-meth efforts, private corporations will step forward to provide funding.

In addition to anti-meth efforts, Goddard also told the board that his office has been working to educate citizens about other issues, such as consumer scams and Internet "bullying." Goddard noted that a booklet listing the top 10 consumer scams is available from his office, and he encourages citizens to request a copy and learn how to protect themselves. He also explained to the board that his office has been working on an Internet safety program since seeing an increase in the number of crimes that originate

as harassment on the Internet and end with violence in the “real world.” Goddard referred to this as Internet “bullying,” and noted that it is prevalent among teenagers.

“We’re just beginning to see this,” he said. “They use the anonymity of the Internet to harass and attack in a way which in other cases would be considered a hate crime.” In order to assist and educate more citizens, Goddard told the board that he has satellite offices staffed by volunteers across the state, and is preparing to open an office in Winslow. Citizens who need information about anti-methamphetamine efforts, consumer scams and Internet crimes, as well as any other matter handled by the state attorney general’s office, can visit the satellite office for assistance.

“Our calls often involve more education than law enforcement,” Goddard noted.

The supervisors thanked Goddard for his visit and asked him to continue to keep the specific needs of rural counties in mind when developing programs and educational information, such as the anti-methamphetamine publications and videos.

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